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SEMINARS ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: THE  
ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS RAISED BY THIS  
TASK IN THE COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA

Sponsored by the Economic Commission for  
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NOTES ON THE NATURE AND METHODOLOGICAL REQUISITES OF  
THE DEVELOPMENT APPRAISAL <sup>\*</sup>

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### 1. Aim of the appraisal

The ultimate objective of the appraisal is to give a critical opinion on the functioning of a system. The functioning of the system is reflected by the results achieved. The appraisal will only be complete, however, if in addition to appraising the results it also makes it possible to explain their origin. Consequently, the factors which gave rise to the results must also be analysed. Some of the factors which condition the results are outside the control of the system, in which case all that is required is to describe their effect on the results, but the rest of the factors are controllable, at least, to some extent, and determine the progress of the activities under consideration. The management of these latter factors and the corresponding activities must be appraised together with the results, since they determine them to a significant extent.

Furthermore, from the point of view of time, the functioning which is to be appraised may correspond to a past time or to a projected future option.

### 2. Requisites of the appraisal

The giving of a critical opinion on the functioning of the system first of all presupposes the existence of a set of desired objectives, against which the results are to be measured. These objectives do not usually take the form of a scattered group of intentions: they are normally interrelated. When the results pursued are linked with each other and are subject to priorities which make it possible to distinguish them according to scales of importance and identify groups of them as components of higher objectives, a normative system is said to exist.

The joint appraisal of results and activities thus requires the existence of another system or analytical model which links them and explains how the results are generated from the activities and from factors exogenous to the system. This is the same model that is used as a basis for projections when the item to be appraised is a future option.

Lastly, both the analytical model and the normative system must be defined qualitatively and quantitatively. This requires the existence of an adequate and timely supply of data.

### 3. The appraisal of the development process

#### (a) Features of the development process which condition its appraisal

The development process possesses certain features which necessarily condition its appraisal. To begin with, it is a process which covers fields belonging to several different disciplines, especially economics, sociology and political science. Hence, it is at once clear that the appraisal of development calls for study of the problem with a unified approach. Secondly, in recent years the development process has shown itself to be very dynamic and highly unstable. From the analytical point of view, these features make the use of methodologies difficult, since the lack of stability makes necessary continuous revisions of the analytical model used. Lastly, international and national factors are increasingly closely associated. Parallel to this phenomenon is the problem of carrying out appraisals at the national and international levels, which involves substantial difficulties in the co-ordination of the normative systems and analytical models used.

These features profoundly affect the work of appraisal and show that the formal systems referred to in sections 1 and 2 become enormously complicated when the subject of critical analysis is the development process. The following paragraphs describe the effects of the nature of development on the definition of the normative systems and analytical models used.

#### (b) The normative system in development

Attempts to define the results pursued by development have to contend with the increasing and changing number of objectives pursued. The multi-disciplinary, unstable and dynamic characteristics of the process complicate the nature and dimensions of the normative system. The methodological answer to this difficulty is to endeavour to define synthetic indicators which reflect the structure of the normative system and are capable of condensing the process of appraisal and thus making it manageable. However, it is by no means

easy to find these indicators, since on the political side the instability causes continual fluctuation of the elements and the weightings which have to be taken into account, while on the analytical side the assembly of elements based on non-integrated economic, social and political theories is a complex matter. Even when the indicator belongs to only one of the fields, the difficulty is still considerable. It is sufficient to recall how much that most basic of the synthetic economic indicators - the national product or income - is questioned.

The legitimate discrepancies between the various countries as regards the elements and weighting of the indicators to be considered constitute another element standing in the way of the establishment of definitions of a general nature in the field of appraisal.

Lastly, the instability of the process also affects the stability of the normative system, since it frequently happens that considerable changes take place between the moment when an activity is planned and the moment when it is appraised. It is probable that many development efforts are on target at the moment when they are initiated or programmed, but that those targets are no longer valid when they are appraised.

(c) The analytical model

The results of the development process are influenced by controllable factors and by exogenous factors, both of an internal and external nature. The results are interrelated with each other, as also are the factors and the results.

In analysing the development process it is vital to discover the link between achievements and efforts, for the degree to which objectives are satisfied depends on activities which are in their turn influenced by both controllable and exogenous factors. Furthermore, one and the same factor can influence numerous objectives. Objectives and factors thus possess numerous interlinkages which it is necessary to describe and explain. The analytical model is made up of the explicit set of relationships between objectives and

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activities. Having such a model available is therefore of great importance for the appraisal, for if it is available it is easier to take advantage of the appraisal to change the results, since it is known which activities generated them. It is also possible to determine the effect on the rest of the results of the alteration of one of them.

The construction of an adequate analytical model meets with difficulties similar to those described in connexion with the normative system, for the lack of analytical integration of the economic, social and political disciplines and the dynamism and instability of the systems similarly conspire against its construction. The variability which affects the definition of the results has already been analysed, and something similar is the case with the activities. In addition to the continual increase in traditional activities associated with the development process, others of a different nature also appear, and there is not sufficient background material for their consideration and their relationships with the rest. Consider, for example, the effort implied in determining the effect of what are known as structural reforms on the rest of the activities and results. The analytical model is also affected by the efforts of the countries - especially the under-developed countries - to turn exogenous factors such as the international monetary parameters and export prices into controlled activities. Thus the explanation of the phenomena to be appraised becomes increasingly complex.

The overall consideration of all the material given in the foregoing paragraphs leads to the conclusion that the construction of an analytical model for the appraisal is a basic requirement if this activity is to be made into something more than a mere opinion given on an unconnected group of results, with no soundly-based explanation of their interrelations and causes.

(d) Appraisal and uncertainty

Appraisal implies recognition of a considerable degree of uncertainty in the study and conduct of the development process. The greater the uncertainty, the more useful the appraisal will be as a systematic means of detecting the areas where there are achievements and the areas where the deficiencies are greatest.

The development process is characterized by a considerable degree of uncertainty on account of its very dynamism and instability. National and international attempts at appraisal have as one of their aims the introduction of greater stability into development efforts through systematic control which will allow a more detailed examination of the legitimacy and variability of the results pursued and a better understanding of the facts: advances which will also improve the representativity of the analytical model used.

(e) Institutional organization for the appraisal of development

The appraisal of the development process does not, as may be the case in other types of discipline, admit of the existence of a control centre clearly differentiated from the executing centres of the activities. Indeed, the opposite is the case, and in view of the fact that a continual review of results and activities is required, those responsible for the appraisal are intimately involved in the advance of the development process. Expressed in national terms, it is the same persons responsible for the development process who make the appraisal, while at the international level, it is the country representatives who judge the effect of their actions and interrelationships. In this area of human activity, permanently and universally accepted normative models and values capable of providing a stable frame of reference do not exist. Consequently, the acceptability of the control depends in the majority of cases on its persuasiveness.

An institutional organization's appraisal capacity is not only a matter of its size. Just as important as the personnel assigned, and perhaps even more so, is the availability of an adequate analytical model, for even with a well-defined normative system the

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absence of an analytical model would mean that only the degree of achievement of the targets could be judged, and it would not be possible to attribute responsibilities for achievements and failures. In administration, such an opinion would only be of very relative value, since it only allows the detection of progress and setbacks, but does not provide any remedies. Furthermore, there is a danger of drawing easy conclusions as regards the causes of the failure and attributing them to the staff or institutions most closely connected with the result, whereas the problems may in fact have had their origin in other sectors of activity.

Lastly, the proper use of the conclusions reached in the appraisal largely depends on the institutional structure. A working routine must be set up at the decision-making levels whereby the material provided by the persons responsible for the appraisal plays an important part in the decisions taken.

(f) Information for the appraisal of development

The operating capacity of the analytical and normative models largely depends on the available capacity for supplying them with reliable and timely information. The changing nature of these models creates serious difficulties for the persons responsible for the appraisal. There is a natural tendency for the structure of the information available to fall out of step with that required for the appraisal. The former information is collected in accordance with a system laid down a considerable time before, since the construction and compilation of statistics requires a relatively long period, whereas the appraisal is most useful when it covers the problems existing at the moment when it is made.

The success of attempts to improve the information to be used will depend largely on the co-ordination between the compilation of data and the institutional structure used in the appraisal. The more closely connected or co-ordinated these activities are, the more flexible the data-compiling systems can be and it will be possible to avoid the delay implied by waiting for their official publication, since in many cases high precision can be sacrificed in exchange for earlier availability of the figures.

/(g) Identification



(g) Identification of patterns of reference, policy objectives and scale of values

The results pursued in the development process are not easily identifiable in practice. Both at the national and international levels, it is difficult to reach a consensus as regards the objectives pursued. It must therefore be accepted that different appraisals may be given of one and the same process and that the important thing is to gain a clear idea of the normative system used. This lack of consensus may give rise to controversies in the appraisal of the development of a country. Understandably, governments do not accept opinions based on normative systems alien to them, specially in the analysis of the social and political aspects of development.

Moreover, as there is no analytical model capable of considering as a whole all the aspects which concern development, and since there is no perfectly co-ordinated institutional organization, it is not surprising that the results pursued and the activities to be carried out appear to be dispersed in institutional terms. Nor is it surprising that contradictions emerge between the objectives of different agencies.

It is part of the job of the appraisal methodology to endeavour to bring order into these aspects and reveal as far as possible any inconsistencies which may exist.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the objectives identified must be kept under continual review. Their variability with time has proved to be quite considerable in many aspects, and if these objectives are not kept in line with one another this may cause the appraisals to lose their validity.

